

Message Text

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ACTION SIG-03

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R 071445Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 6293

FI CHANNEL

FOR INSPECTOR GENERAL FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASIG, TS
SUBJECT: INSPECTION OF TUNIS: POST MEMORANDUM

REF: STATE 211834

1. BY THE TIME THAT THIS TELEGRAM IS RECEIVED, THE INSPECTION TEAM WILL HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS U.S. OBJECTIVES IN TUNISIA AND ISSUES AND PROBLEMS DIRECTLY WITH AMBASSADOR MULCAHY DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON. I WILL, THEREFORE, MAKE WHAT FOLLOWS AS BRIEF AND TO THE POINT AS POSSIBLE.

2. STATE OF RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA. THE MOST CURRENT STATEMENT OF OUR RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA IS CONTAINED IN TUNIS 1181 OF 15 FEBRUARY 78 (U.S. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: AMBASSADOR'S OVERVIEW). THE TOATE OF OUR RELATIONS HAS BEEN LITTLE ALTERED BY THE EVENTS OF THE LAST SEVEN MONTHS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT 1978 HAS BEEN A YEAR OF DRAMATIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TUNISIA. THE AFTER EFFECTS OF THE CIVIL DISTURBANCES OF JANUARY26 ARE STILL BEING FELT, AND THE IMPENDING TRIAL OF THOSE WHOM THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT DEEMS RESPONSIBLE FOR
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THE DISORDERS WILL PROBABLY AFFECT THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THE EMERGENCE OF A POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND PUBLIC PRESS CRITICISM OF THE REGIME, INCLUDING CHARGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, HAS BEGUN TO ALTER THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION--NOTED OVER THE LAST GENERATION FOR ITS RELATIVE TRANQUILITY. NEVERTHELESS, U.S.-

TUNISIAN RELATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN SERIOUSLY AFFECTED TO DATE, AND IT WOULD STILL PROBABLY BE FAIR TO STATE, AS WE DID IN THE POST MEMORANDUM FOR THE 1976 INSPECTION, THAT OUR RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA ARE AS GOOD AS THOSE WE HAVE WITH ANY OTHER NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY. IN THE TENSE SITUATION THAT HAS PREVAILED IN TUNISIA THIS YEAR, IT HAS BEEN INCUMBENT UPON THE EMBASSY TO DEVOTE AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF TIME AND EFFORT TO DETAILED IN-DEPTH REPORTING AND ANALYSIS OF THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND PROSECUTION OF TRADE UNION LEADERS INVOLVED IN THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 26, PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. SINCE THE POST WAS LAST INSPECTED, THERE HAS BEEN A STRENGTHENING OF THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP WITH TUNISIA AND A MARKED QUICKENING OF THE TEMPO OF AID ACTIVITIES. TWO YEARS AGO THE TUNISIANS WERE APPREHENSIVE OF U.S. INTENTIONS IN REGARD TO ASSISTING THE NEW FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN, AND THE EFFECT THAT OUR LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS MIGHT HAVE ON OTHER AID DONORS. THESE CONCERNS HAVE NOW BEEN DISPELLED, AND WE HAVE ENTERED INTO A FRUITFUL PERIOD OF COOPERATION THAT SHOULD TAKE US THROUGH THE END OF THE CURRENT TUNISIAN FIVE-YEAR PLAN IN 1981.

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4. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS: AFTER CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM, I CAN IDENTIFY ONLY TWO PROBLEMS OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO INCLUDE IN THIS MEMORANDUM, AND NEITHER COULD BE CLASSED AS MAJOR PROBLEMS.

A. U.S. POSTURE IN REGARD TO TUNISIAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. THE EVOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL SCENARIOS IN TUNISIA WILL REQUIRE VERY CAREFUL RESPONSES ON THE PART OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN STEADY RELATIONS WITH A COUNTRY THAT HAS BEEN A CLOSE FRIEND OF THE U.S. SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE IN 1956, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DEMONSTRATING OUR SUPPORT FOR ALL DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS IN THE COUNTRY AND OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA AS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL BE AN INSUPERABLE TASK, BUT IT WILL REQUIRE OUR BEST EFFORTS. OUR EASY RELATIONSHIP OF THE LAST TWENTY-TWO YEARS MAY BE STRAINED IN COMING MONTHS OR YEARS, BUT IT IS INCUMBENT UPON US TO PROTECT A RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS BEEN BUILT UP WITH TUNISIA OVER MANY YEARS, A RELATIONSHIP WHICH

HAS ENHANCED TUNISIA'S MODERATE STANCE AMONG THIRD-WORLD COUNTRIES AND ITS STABILIZING INFLUENCE IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN. THIS MUST BE A MISSION-WIDE UNDERTAKING AND NOT JUST A CONCERN OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT ELEMENT.

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B. LOOKING FORWARD TO THE TERMINATION OF OUR AID RELATIONSHIP. IF TUNISIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCEEDS AS PLANNED, BY 1981 THE MISSION OF AID HERE WILL BE MOSTLY COMPLETED, AND, ON THE BASIS OF PRESENT EVIDENCE WITH A FINAL BURST OF ACTIVITY THAT SHOULD BRING THIS RELATIONSHIP TO AN END ON A POSITIVE NOTE. BY THAT TIME OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WILL ALSO BE NEAR THE END OF ITS TASK OF ASSISTING IN THE MODERNIZATION OF THE TUNISIAN ARMED FORCES. IT CAN ALSO BE EXPECTED THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PEACE CORPS IN TUNISIA WILL BE DRAWING TO A CLOSE. IN THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS IT WILL BE A MAJOR TASK OF THE MISSION TO ORGANIZE THE PHASING OUT OF ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN AN ORDERLY, EFFICIENT AND HUMANE MANNER, KEEPING IN MIND ALWAYS THAT IT WOULD NOT BE PRUDENT TO SET ARBITRARY DATES FOR THE TERMINATION OF ANY U.S. GOVERNMENT PROGRAM.

5. EVALUATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS: IN THE PAST TWO YEARS WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN FORMULATING AND IMPLEMENTING A LAST-PHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO TUNISIA IN VARIOUS AREAS. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE CAN BE PROUD OF THE QUALITY AND BALANCE OF OUR REPORTING ON WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST TURBULENT YEAR IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT TUNISIA.
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